

not just the cheapest, for example. They might well believe that is a pretty good thing.

The GAO and others say this may well increase the coverage. The assumption that a couple million people will opt out, I do not believe that.

The second thing is, we are going to need to solve the farm problem with folks around here from both sides of the political aisle. The Presiding Officer is from Kansas, a big State in dealing with the farm issue. I would never suggest that somehow he doesn't care about farmers. I have served with him in the House and the Senate and know too well how much he cares about family farmers. We need, at some point, to get together on a solution to deal with the farm crisis. I understand that. I have not said—and I could, I suppose—all right, you took \$6 billion that you created someplace and gave it to defense.

So my contention is this: You gave the Defense Department money they didn't ask for that should have gone to farmers. I could come out here and make that case, I suppose. But I am not doing that. I have said I thought if there was \$6 billion, we should have a debate about the priorities. We didn't. The Defense Department got it, and I am sure they will use it for security needs, readiness, and other things.

My point is, on the underlying bill, I don't think we should be too quick to pass it, because it doesn't have the fundamental resources to deal with the farm crisis.

In any event, last week the Democratic leader informed the majority leader: If you don't give us the opportunity that we insist upon as Senators, to bring these issues to the floor, such as the Patients' Bill of Rights, then we intend to offer it as an amendment to whatever vehicle is on the floor. Anybody who is surprised by that simply wasn't awake last week.

So we will get through this. I think the way we will do it is to have a full debate on the Patients' Bill of Rights at some point, with the ability to offer amendments, as we should, and I hope we will also have a robust debate on the issue of the farm crisis response.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time requested by the Senator has expired.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 3 p.m. and that the time be equally di-

vided between the minority and majority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I think it is appropriate to respond to some of the commentary from the other side about the Patients' Bill of Rights—the Republican plan versus the Kennedy bill, the proposal that the other side has put forth.

The American public should know and recognize that a majority in this Congress is for moving on an effective proposal and for addressing the needs of the American citizens relative to dealing with HMOs, and that is the Republican Patients' Bill of Rights. It is a very good package of ideas put together after a long and serious amount of consideration. It came out of the committee of jurisdiction with a majority vote, is now on the floor, and has received a majority vote in the Senate. It would significantly improve the situation of patients as they deal with doctors and HMOs across this country.

I think, however, that it also ought to be noted on the other side of the coin that what Senator KENNEDY's proposal does is to continue the Clinton health care plan that we saw about 5 years ago—I guess it was 5 years ago now—"Hillary-Care," as it came to be known. This is sort of the daughter of "Hillary-Care" or son of "Hillary-Care," as put forth by the Senator from Massachusetts. Essentially, if you are going to be honest about the practical effect of the proposal of the Senator from Massachusetts, it is to increase the premiums for private health insurance in this country by at least 4 percent potentially; other estimates have been as high as 6 percent.

When you start raising the premiums for health insurance—especially on self-insured individuals—the impact of that is that people drop out of the health care insurance system. Why is that? Because they can't afford it. If you are a small business of five or six employees, if you are running a restaurant, or if you are running an auto shop or a small software company, and your costs go up 4 percent on your health care premium, that can amount to a significant cost increase, and in many instances that is going to be the difference between making it and not making it in some of these small companies. So you have a situation where people drop the insurance.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the practical effect of the Kennedy health care plan will be that well over 1 million people will drop their health insurance. Why is this important? Why does this tie into "Hillary-Care"? Because, if you will recall, back in the days when we were debating the issues of "Hillary-Care," the basic proposal was to create a nationalized system where the Federal Government would come in and take over all

insurance carriers in this country, for all intents and purposes, with the logic behind that being that there were too many uninsured people in the health market to date, too many Americans simply did not have health care insurance, and therefore we needed to have "Hillary-Care."

Nationalization of the health care industry was proposed at that time, and the Kennedy bill was introduced by Senator KENNEDY on behalf of the First Lady, and the proposal was, let's nationalize the system so all the uninsured in this country will have a system of insurance.

Of course, it failed miserably, because it was incredibly complex, it was incredibly bureaucratic, and it was extraordinarily expensive for the American taxpayer. The cost increase and the tax burden for the American taxpayer would have far exceeded any savings in premium that would have occurred, and the cost in bureaucracy and the loss of effectiveness in the administration of health care in this country would have had a major impact on the quality of health care.

So out of common sense, good sense, and good politics, the program was rejected out of hand, and in fact it never came to a vote in the Senate because, quite honestly, a majority on the other side of the aisle was embarrassed by the proposal and they decided to walk away from it.

What we have here is essentially is an extension of that, because what we have is a back-door proposal to health care. Unhappy with the fact that they were unable to nationalize the health care system, in order to cover those folks who do not have enough health insurance, they have now decided, by bits and pieces, through small slices—this one is a very large slice but through smaller slices of the pie—to slowly uninsure Americans. So there is such a large pool of uninsured Americans that we will have to come back to a "Hillary-Care" system so there will be justification for nationalization of the health insurance industry, because there will be all these uninsured people out there who have been created and, because of a lack of insurance, we will have to create legislation.

Because of all of these different actions taken—proposals such as we are seeing today on "Kennedy-Care," which will create another 1 million-plus people who are uninsured—next year we will have another proposal which will create another group of uninsured and there will be another proposal to increase the cost of insurance. And they will add something else to private insurance costs—some new benefit, or initiative—that will have all sorts of trappings of nice political sounds so that they will need to raise the cost of insurance premiums. So more people will step off of insurance, and more and more people will end up being uninsured over a period of time, and we will end up with just more people becoming uninsured as we continue

down the road of adopting these initiatives which are put forward by the Senator from Massachusetts.

I will tell you, I think the basic game plan here is to create such a pool of uninsured people in this country that we have to turn the corner and come all the way back so that the Senator from Massachusetts and the First Lady can come to us again and say, now, we really need to nationalize the health care system because we have all of these uninsured people.

I think there is a bit of a cynical game plan behind the Democratic proposal, the Kennedy plan. Maybe I am being too suspicious, but, as a practical matter, I think I am being accurate and I am observing what the factual events will be.

The fact is that because of the premium costs that will increase, which are going to be driven by "Kennedy-Care," as proposed by this bill, we will end up with more people uninsured, and the more people that become uninsured in this country, the greater the demand from the other side of the aisle will be for a nationalized system of health care.

I will tell you, if a nationalized system of health care was a bad idea 5 years ago, it would be a bad idea today, and it will be an idea 5 years from now when we hear from the other side of the aisle how important it is because so many people had to drop off the health care system, because they increased the premiums on the health care system by passing their proposed Kennedy health care bill.

I just wanted to make some of those comments in response to some of the comments from the other side.

I think it is ironic that we are holding up agriculture appropriations over the issue of the Patients' Bill of Rights. I have never been a great fan of the way we fund agriculture in this country, as the Senator in the Chair knows. We have been discussing this issue for a number of years both in the House and in the Senate. I recognize that the farmers in this country are a critical part of our economy and that this agricultural appropriations bill is the reasonable, responsible way of addressing those farmers' needs.

We have heard about the crisis in the farm community from the other side of the aisle ad nauseam now for 3 months, and suddenly we are about to pass the agriculture appropriations bill, and on the other side of the aisle Senators from farm States come forward and say, no, we can't do the agriculture appropriations bill.

As someone who is not from a farm-community State—I have a few farmers, but they are not the dominant culture in New Hampshire. We wish they were. They are certainly wonderful, hard-working people. But as somebody who is not from a farm-culture State, I have to scratch my head and say, is the crisis real? If these folks on the other side of the aisle, who for months have been telling us about the severe crisis

in farm country, come forward when we are about to do the agriculture appropriations bill and delay it for weeks and weeks, and potentially even months, I ask, is the crisis real in farm country? Should I, when we get another supplemental appropriations bill which has another few billion dollars for the farm crisis, take that seriously, or are we being "gamed"?

I think they put into serious jeopardy the reasonable arguments that have been put forward from our side of the aisle by the Senator from Kansas and the Senator from Montana, who understand the farm issue and who make good arguments on behalf of the farm issue. Those folks who are credible on the farm issue on our side of the aisle are having their credibility undercut by this type of action from the other side of the aisle, which really plays games with the farm crisis and really dilutes the arguments on the farm crisis when they are willing to delay the funding of the farm bill for what is clearly a political initiative undertaken for the purposes of trying to generate a higher polling rate than some poll taken in some political election.

To me, there is a fair amount of cynicism in this Senate today, and most of it is being promoted by the actions brought forward by Members on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, there is strong bipartisan support to address the problem of unequal quorum call time charges. We simply cannot let this injustice go on. Let us take action. So to rectify this situation, I now suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, may I inquire about the state of business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator may speak for 25 minutes. We are still in morning business.

#### AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I yield myself as much of the 25 minutes as may be necessary to make my point.

I rise today with substantial concern and significant frustration. The pend-

ing business before the Senate is the agriculture appropriations bill. But for the second day in a row, it appears that we will not work on this important legislation. Those on the other side of the aisle have said they will not let any legislative work get done until they are able to have, apparently, an unlimited debate on a so-called Bill of Rights for health care patients.

Those on the other side claim that they must have a debate on their bill, but that is not the point. What they are really doing is thwarting this body, the Senate, in its constitutional duty to pass appropriations bills so that we can make sure that important components of our Government remain viable and continue to do their job.

The agriculture appropriation bill is a very important measure, not just in one State in America but in every State in America. Let me remind all Senators that our responsibility to pass appropriations bills is defined by the U.S. Constitution, which requires "appropriations made by law"—that means we have to pass them—"prior to the expenditure of any money from the Federal Treasury." That is article I, section 9.

I see nothing in my reading of the Constitution that says the Senate must have unlimited debate on some other issue of interest or that the Senate even has the authority to speak on all the issues between a patient and a doctor.

Granted, we have until October 1 to conclude the appropriations process. That seems like a long way off, summer having just started. But I am not sure exactly why we would be dragging our feet now, because I am sure I do not have to remind anybody of what happened last October when we did not do our work early. Congress did not complete its job on time, and the American people are the ones who ended up paying for our irresponsibility with a \$20 billion-some so-called emergency appropriation that came when, instead of constitutionally addressing our responsibility on appropriations, the President and a few Members of this body combined to invade the Social Security trust fund for about \$22 billion in emergency spending.

Members on both sides of the aisle complained bitterly for months about the process and the outcome. Members from both sides pledged to work together to make sure that history did not repeat itself this year.

I commend the leadership and the Appropriations Committee for the wonderful start that has been made on the appropriations bills. It is June 24, and the Senate has passed four appropriations bills and has five more ready for the floor. If those on the other side ever allow us to return to our duties, we can do the job and do it well.

Let me caution all of us that summer will pass quickly. We should not put off our responsibilities. We are sent here by our constituents to do our jobs for